

Executive Office of Elder Affairs

# Elder Update

October 2002

*“Preparing today for everyone’s tomorrow”*



JANE SWIFT  
GOVERNOR

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LILLIAN GLICKMAN  
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## ELDER AFFAIRS HELPS SENIORS TO COPE WITH COSTLY HMO CHANGES



*Dick Miranda of **Wakefield** provides health insurance counseling to Phil Byrnes of **Milton**.*

In response to the recent decision of several health maintenance organizations (HMOs) to raise costs and, in some cases, to terminate services for elderly members, Elder Affairs' SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders) Program has launched a statewide consumer outreach and assistance campaign. The campaign follows Tufts Health Plan Medicare+Choice Program's decision to pull out of 18 Massachusetts communities, forcing 11,000 elders to consider another health insurance option. Meanwhile, HMOs such as Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, and Fallon Community Health Plan are raising premiums, in some cases doubling what they now charge. The HMOs blame declining federal Medicare reimbursements for the changes. SHINE, which provides free and unbiased health insurance information and counseling to Medicare beneficiaries, is assisting consumers and elder care professionals affected by the changes. SHINE advises consumers through forums, group counseling sessions and printed fact sheets. Through these supports, consumers receive an overview of HMO/insurance options and tips on when to switch to a new health insurance plan. "Elders continue to shoulder heavier loads because of changes in the health care industry," Secretary Glickman said. "SHINE provides elders and families with tools to cope and make informed health care decisions." In related news, all Massachusetts Medicare beneficiaries can enroll in a Blue Cross and Blue Shield or United Health Care Medigap plan until December 31st. For details, call Elder Affairs at 1-800-AGE-INFO (TTY: 1-800-872-0166).

## HOME CARE SPARED IN NEW CUTS TO ELDER AFFAIRS

The state Home Care Program, which saves the Commonwealth money by preventing thousands of Massachusetts elders from requiring expensive nursing homes, was not included in the latest round of budget cuts affecting Elder Affairs. The Governor's \$202 million "9C" emergency cuts, necessitated by the sliding economy and the constitutional responsibility to balance the budget, were unable to fully protect other programs. Prescription Advantage, the state's prescription drug insurance plan that now serves 83,000 elders and younger people with disabilities, fell by \$2 million to \$95.6 million. Council on Aging grants dropped by \$60,000 to \$5.9 million. Supportive Housing, which delivers "assisted living-like" services to residents of public elderly housing, was cut by \$85,000 to \$1.94 million. Congregate Housing, which provides service coordination to frail, low-income elders, was reduced by \$150,000 to \$1.2 million. The 9C cuts also mandate five unpaid furlough days for state managers. In related news, the Department of Public Health announced that the number of available flu vaccines will be down by 19 percent from last year.

## OVERFLOW CROWD AT MATURE WORKER JOB FAIR IS "BITTERSWEET"

More than 1,000 people — 700 of whom were walk-in registrants — and 18 employers converged recently at the first-ever free statewide job fair for mature workers in **Boxboro**. Sponsored by Elder Affairs, AARP, and the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the job fair brought together several of the Commonwealth's leading employers, such as TJX Inc., Reebok International Ltd., Star Staff Inc., (Recruiters for Shell Oil), American Express Financial Advisors, and Coca-Cola Bottling Company of New England. Cosmo Macero, a high-profile business columnist for the *Boston Herald*, delivered keynote remarks. "The overwhelming success of this event is bittersweet," Secretary Glickman said in her introduction. "We are pleased to offer a job fair of obvious value to unemployed and underemployed mature workers, yet we lament the economy that created this need." The Secretary encouraged businesses to increase opportunities for older workers to benefit themselves and their potential new employees.

## "ATTENTION, T RIDERS: YOUR NEXT STOP IS 800-AGE-INFO"

Riders of the "T" soon will see that their best stop for elder services is 1-800-AGE-INFO (1-800-243-4636; TTY:1-800-872-0166). Sponsored jointly by Elder Affairs and Mass. Home Care, 1-800-AGE-INFO messages such as the one displayed below are about to appear on billboards on selected MBTA buses and trains. The different posters inform elders and caregivers that they can "explore what's possible" in elder care information and services by dialing the toll-free number or clicking on its companion web site, [www.800ageinfo.com](http://www.800ageinfo.com). The phone line offers up-to-date information on prescription drug assistance, health insurance, caregiving, and other consumer issues. It also provides callers with a direct link to their nearest Home Care and Protective Services agency. The family-friendly phone line is now open Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**"A nursing home?  
Is that my only choice?"**

**1-800-Age-Info  
(1-800-243-4636)  
Explore what's possible.**

**Hours: M-F 9am-8pm, Sat 9am-1pm  
[www.800ageinfo.com](http://www.800ageinfo.com)**

**Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs/ Mass Home Care**



## **ELDER AFFAIRS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MOVES UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP**



Charlotte Yacker of **Chestnut Hill** (pictured right) has been elected chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee to Elder Affairs (CAC). Yacker, who succeeds Walter Jennings of **Newton** in the top position of the 48-member body, is a long-time volunteer for AARP and active member of the CAC. Her first official act was to welcome Helen Dreher Credle, a new member from **Dorchester** (pictured left). The CAC advises the Governor, through Secretary Glickman, on policy matters and other issues affecting the more than 1.1 million elders and families in Massachusetts. "I am excited about this unique opportunity to help advance Elder Affairs' defining mission of promoting the independence of elders," Yacker said. At recent quarterly meetings, CAC members have focused discussion on prescription drugs, housing, long-term care and caregiving.

## **IN TOUGH TIMES, ELDERS TURN TO COUNCILS ON AGING**

The outstanding efforts of the Commonwealth's 348 Councils on Aging were recognized at the ROSE (Resources Organized to Service Elders) Awards at the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging and Senior Center Directors' (MCOA) most recent annual conference in **Falmouth**. "In a climate marked by budget cuts and service losses, Councils on Aging stand tall as information and resource focal points for grateful communities," said Secretary Glickman, who presented handsome plaques to representatives of the five winning Councils: **Dighton, Holden, Ludlow, Pembroke** and **Sudbury** (profile sketches of each winner are available by calling Adam Kramer at 617-222-7494). The Secretary also honored Joanne Pratt of **Foxboro** with the 2nd Annual Lorraine Garland Award for Community Leadership.

## **ELDER AFFAIRS HAS COME A LONG WAY IN 12 YEARS**

A new report highlights how the Weld, Cellucci and Swift Administrations have improved the quality of life for the Commonwealth's elders and their families. The report shows substantial progress in delivering affordable prescription drug coverage, better housing options and more cost-effective community-based services to elders. The Administrations have championed Elder Affairs' defining mission to promote the dignity, independence and rights of Massachusetts elders and to support their families, through advocacy and the development and management of programs and services. Since 1990, Elder Affairs' community-based services and program have been improved (and in some cases, added) to meet the needs of a growing elder population. In 1990, there were 92,209 Massachusetts residents age 85 or older; today there are 116,692. Census 2000 shows that Massachusetts now ranks 10<sup>th</sup> nationally for its 85-plus population. Moreover, the population served not only has increased in the past 12 years, but also it has become frailer. Among the programs cited in the report are Prescription Advantage, Home Care, Supportive Housing, and the Family Caregiver Support Program. For a copy of the report, call Adam Kramer at Elder Affairs: (617) 222-7494.

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### NEW PROGRAM GIVES ELDERS A CHOICE

Elder Affairs and the Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) are preparing to launch a statewide pilot program to help more elders remain at home and avoid a move into a nursing home. The Community Choices Program will provide MassHealth eligible elders at risk of nursing home placement with increased home care services such as personal care, home health assistance, and transportation services. Elder Affairs and DMA will work closely with the Commonwealth's 27 Aging Services Access Points to identify elders who may be eligible for the program.



Representative Michael Festa of **Melrose** (pictured left) and Senator Brian Joyce of **Milton** (pictured right), supported by several colleagues in both branches of the General Court, led the legislature's effort to enact this program to provide assistance to elders who wish to age in place in their home community. "This new program underscores our commitment to enable elders to remain at home and in their community where they most want to be," said Secretary Glickman, adding that this will be the first time home care costs are linked to a percentage of nursing home costs.

### ROUND-UP FROM THE ELDER NETWORK

Congratulations to the **Clinton, Somerset, and Attleboro** Councils on Aging for 30 years of dedicated service to elders and their families. Secretary Glickman recently addressed the 2,500 participants of Senator Brian Lee's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Golden Gathering held in **Springfield**. Happy 112th birthday to Aurelia Marotta of **Boston**, who is among the oldest and most inspirational residents of the Commonwealth, and happy 90th birthday to **Boston's** Elsie Frank, the Commonwealth's charismatic leader of elder advocacy. Elder Affairs will host a fall reception for the many talented elder artists who submitted original artwork for display at the agency. The artists and their supporters from **Newton, Needham, Halifax, Rowley, and Holyoke** have been invited to the reception, where nearly 100 artistic creations from 75 elders are on display as part of the agency's inaugural rotation. The second rotation will include poetry, paintings and other art from elders in **Lexington, Clinton, Rockport** and **West Springfield**. For more information, call Diane Applegate at Elder Affairs: (617) 222-7450.

#### VITAL NUMBERS

Elder Affairs:	1-800-AGE-INFO (1-800-243-4636)
TDD/TTY:	1-800-872-0166
Fax:	1-617-727-9368
Elder Abuse Hotline w/TTY:	1-800-922-2275

#### ELDER SERVICES ONLINE

Click on [www.800ageinfo.com](http://www.800ageinfo.com) for the latest information on programs, services, resources and related links available to Massachusetts elders and their families.

*The success of this monthly publication depends on you. Please share your ideas and feedback with the editor, Derrek Shulman: (617) 222-7460.*

For a copy of this document in other accessible formats, call 1-800-AGE-INFO; TDD/TTY: 1-800-872-0166.